

THE AGE OF CONSTANTINE
CHANGE AND CONTINUITY
IN
ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMY

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AN analysis of the social and economic conditions prevailing in the empire ruled by Constantine seems at first an assignment impossible to complete. How can events so political—better, so biographical—as the beginning and end of one man's reign mark off significant phases in the ways by which millions of lesser men made their livings and worked out their relations to each other? The social historian feels, probably wrongly, that his colleagues in religion and art face fewer difficulties. Whatever his own beliefs, Constantine encouraged, if he did not himself initiate, a major revolution in ecclesiastical institutions. He sponsored the building of churches in which the trained eye has found distinctive styles of construction and decoration. Was there, as well, a distinctive economic style to be called Constantinian?

It is the thesis of the following study that a distinctive style did indeed prevail where decisions made by Constantine impinged upon his subjects' lives. The conclusion apparently breaks no new ground. Historians in his and our own time have been quick to call him a revolutionary, an innovator to use the word of art current in the present symposium. But distinctiveness is not necessarily to be equated with revolution, and the phrase begs a second question. Was Constantine the author of novelties? Still a third question stems from the judgements delivered upon his policies and practices, whether they be the stuff of innovation or tradition. Constantine as an economic planner has not enjoyed a good press. Some will not call "great" a ruler who failed to arrest a vertiginous inflation of the copper coinage, a charge which each reader should feel free to assess by his own lights. He stands guilty in other courts of "reckless fiscality," whatever that may mean. Should we agree with these negative, even sour, judgements?¹

Answers to these questions may be found by considering, within the context of the circumstances that shaped them, certain decisions which Constantine and his advisors had to make. These included: decisions leading to the creation of a "double army" embodying a permanent field force of *comitatenses* and a frontier guard of *limitanei*; decisions that elaborated and increased the central administration; decisions that promoted the fortunes of the Christian Church by bestowing upon it gifts often derived by the spoliation of pagan temples; decisions that altered the relationships of the currency system by creating a gold *solidus* struck at seventy-two pieces to the pound and copper *folles* coined at ever lower rates; finally, the decision to found a "New Rome" at a site known before him as Byzantium and ever after as Constantinople.²

¹ See, for example, A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols. (Norman, Okla., 1964), vol. 2, esp. p. 111 (hereafter: Jones, *LRES*); J. Vogt, *Constantin der Große und sein Jahrhundert*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1960), p. 225f.; W. Giesecke, *Antikes Geldwesen* (Leipzig, 1938), p. 209; S. Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali del quarto secolo* (Rome, 1951), esp. pp. 106–116. For good bibliographies of the age of Constantine and the later Roman Empire generally, see R. Rémond, *La crise de l'empire romain* (Paris, 1964). Only essential items are noted in the following pages.

² Army: D. van Berchem, *L'armée de Dioclétien et la réforme constantinienne* (Paris, 1952), and W.

To discover how these decisions affected his subjects' lives we shall have to look into the provinces, drawing upon the vast amount of archaeological research and reinterpretation accomplished during the past generation. Quantity, in fact, is so great and results often so surprising that few will want to generalize about the fourth century with the confidence of a Seeck, a Lot, or a Rostovtzeff. No one will share all their pessimism, and it may be no accident that the first book to view the century with marked optimism began with a survey of the provinces.³

Yet the date of its publication, 1947, should be marked. Evidence which today justifies at least guarded optimism had then only started to appear. Historians since the 1930's have been quicker to judge the institutions of the later Roman Empire in a positive fashion primarily because changing assumptions have permitted or encouraged them to do so. The older assumptions are not difficult to discover. In good evolutionary fashion, the pessimists saw the Empire more or less as a single organism, mortally ill from primary disease ranging from soil exhaustion to class conflict, and fated to follow a downward path toward catastrophe that struck early in the West but unaccountably later in the East. Particularly when read against the standards of classical liberalism or laissez-faire economics, the Theodosian Code explained and delineated that path in a thoroughly satisfactory fashion.

Strains of the twentieth century have dealt harshly with many of the assumptions. A belief in the overriding power of evolutionary forces has yielded to a greater concern for individual decisions, the matter with which this study deals. Sometimes they seem irrational, and they are not to be subsumed in "laws." Economists and economic historians have abandoned the belief that stages of money economy and natural economy follow each other with the regularity and pervasiveness of night and day. A given period may find the two coexisting more or less peacefully. Finally, experiences during the two World Wars have been equally unkind to dogmas of classical liberalism and laissez-faire economics. Heavy pressures bearing upon inadequate resources sometimes leave a regime in power with no alternatives. In an emergency it must fix men to their tasks.

Thus, men of the mid-twentieth century write about the harrassed souls of the fourth century with a degree of sympathy that is sometimes a little disquieting.⁴ The change has been striking. An archaeologist born in 1871 illus-

Seston, "Du comitatus de Dioclétien aux comitatenses de Constantin," *Historia*, 4 (1955), pp. 284-296. Central administration and praetorian prefects: W. Ensslin, "Praefectus praetorio" in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 22, pt. 2 (1954), col. 2391 ff., esp. cols. 2426 - 2434 with bibliography (hereafter: *PWRE*). Coinage: H. Mattingly, *Roman Coins* (London, 1960), esp. pp. 211 ff., 245 ff. Constantine, Christianity, and church-building: R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 17-45; L. Voelkl, *Die Kirchenstiftungen des Kaisers Konstantin im Lichte des römischen Sakralrechts* (Cologne, 1964); D. J. Geanakoplos, "Church Building and Caesaropapism," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 7 (1966), p. 167 ff. Constantinople: bibliography listed in Rémondon, *Crise*, p. 36.

³ This was A. Piganiol, *L'empire chrétien* (Paris, 1947). Optimism and pessimism contrasted with references to earlier literature in Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali*, pp. 7-31.

⁴ See, e.g., P. Lambrechts, "Le problème du dirigisme d'état au IV^e siècle," *L'antiquité classique*, 18 (1949), p. 109 ff.

trated the older point of view when he reflected about the glass industry to be found in and around Cologne during the fourth century:

“Une tare, en effet, pèse sur cette industrie comme sur les autres; le manque de liberté et l'hérité . . . Le talent en effet n'est pas héréditaire et, d'autre part, l'absence de liberté interdit aux dispositions naturelles de se réaliser dans les œuvres qu'elles auraient pu produire . . . Ne cherchons pas ailleurs la raison de la sécheresse et l'ennui de cet art déjà byzantin.”⁵

Another archaeologist wrote in 1960 about the fourth-century cities of the Rhineland in a tone reflecting differences greater than those of language alone:

“Der Staatsozialismus jener Zeit mit seiner zentralistischen Organisation, seinen staatlichen brain-trusts, seinen Aufpassern und mit der Prachtentfaltung, die alle Diktaturen an sich haben, mit seinen Wirtschaftsgesetzen und dem militärischen Zuschnitt des ganzen Staatsapparates, all das war ein gutes Boden für die neuerliche Entfaltung städtischen Wesens.”⁶

I think we may do without the police spies and some of the other apparatus, but at least we are rid of the older conception of a unitary organism (the Empire) bound irretrievably upon its downward path. In its place we have a community of communities whose members must concurrently face a host of problems that press upon them with greater and lesser degrees of immediacy.⁷

A community of communities does not readily invite generalization. Did the “West” follow one path between the third and fifth centuries while the “East” pursued another? Two undoubtedly western, even far western, provinces diverged quite notably in the period in question. Britain, in part by exploiting resources of tin and argentiferous lead, entered upon a period of prosperity without precedent in its history.⁸ Spain, its mineral wealth untapped or exhausted, seems to have slumbered in a darkness made impenetrable for us by the paucity of information.⁹ Even an individual province might exhibit the most astonishing diversity. Northern Italy, the *Italia annonaria* of Diocletian's reforms, achieved a favorable balance of trade during the latter part of the century. The south, including Campania, had to import to live.¹⁰ Prosperity did not strike all of *Italia annonaria* in equal measure. Milan flourished together with its port city, Genoa, while in 388 St. Ambrose lamented the *semirutarum urbium cadavera* strewn along the Via Aemilia, Bologna and

⁵ A. Grenier, *La Gaule romaine* in T. Frank ed., *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, 3 (Baltimore, 1937), p. 631.

⁶ H. von Petrikovits, *Das römische Rheinland. Archäologische Forschungen seit 1945* (Cologne, 1960), p. 102.

⁷ Adapting the comment of Rémondon, *Crise*, p. 262.

⁸ I. Richmond, *Roman Britain* (London, 1963), p. 123.

⁹ A. Balil, “Hispania en los años 260 a 300 d. J-C,” *Emerita*, 27 (1959), pp. 269–295, esp. p. 286. But the economic history of late-Roman Spain is still to be recovered, let alone written. The gap is not filled by G. Lachica, “La estructura económica de Hispania en el Bajo Imperio,” *Zephyrus*, 12 (1962), pp. 55–169.

¹⁰ See the outstanding study of L. Ruggini, *Economia e società nell'Italia annonaria* (Milan, 1961), pt. 1, *passim*, esp. pp. 114f. and 30, note 48, where it seems that *annonaria* did not need the tax relief of arrears accorded to *suburbicaria* by, e.g., *Codex Theodosianus*, XI, 28, 2 (395); (hereafter: *CTh*, with all citations from the edition of Mommsen and Meyer). See also K. Hannestad, *L'évolution des ressources agricoles de l'Italie* (Copenhagen, 1962), p. 19.

Modena among them.¹¹ Economic leadership in Dalmatia passed from the coastal cities, Salona excepted, to agricultural centers that dotted the interior.¹²

Fourth-century trade and urban development will be far from easy to analyze, so contradictory is the evidence and so variable the phenomena. Which is a better index of the whole: Carnuntum, where long-distance trade with other provinces seems not to have survived the third-century crisis; Cologne, where the production and possibly the export of glass flourished in the fourth century; or Sucidava in Oltenia, where the army imported amphorae for its exclusive use?¹³ Romans in third-century Britain enclosed wide stretches of open land within their city walls; their contemporaries on the continent might retreat into urban precincts far more constricted than those they had enjoyed in the spacious days of the Antonines.¹⁴ Sometimes the city walls protected a regime of exchanges that was sluggish at best, but the men of Milan, Genoa, Aquileia, and Arles used the narrower precincts as a citadel to which they retreated when necessity demanded. For an active industrial and commercial life they maintained suburbs outside the walls, foreshadowing those that would later distinguish the towns of mediaeval Europe.¹⁵ When a suburb appears, it may reflect population growth and expansion from the core outward; equally well, it may indicate contraction from the periphery inward, a flight from exposed regions to the safety of the citadel, as at Athens.¹⁶

Diversity in economic activity and in the degree of urbanization naturally created a correspondingly wide variety of social relationships and status. The ruined villas of Pannonia and the mosaics of North Africa suggest, or even represent, the classic type of the late Roman *possessor* as Rostovtzeff portrayed him. He takes shelter in his walled villa. All sorts and conditions of men surround him, working to provide from the villa's own resources most of the commodities he and they need.¹⁷ The portrait should be touched up and others

¹¹ Ruggini, *Italia annonaria*, p. 56 ff. and esp. p. 61 citing Ambrose, *Epist.* 39, 3.

¹² G. Alföldy, *Bevölkerung und Gesellschaft der römischen Provinz Dalmatien* (Budapest, 1965), p. 208.

¹³ On Carnuntum: E. Swoboda, *Carnuntum*, 3rd ed. (Graz-Cologne, 1958), pp. 61f., 80ff. Carnuntum declined as the Rhineland trade gained at the expense of the Italian. On Cologne, the older survey of Grenier, *Gaule romaine*, p. 623 ff., esp. 628f., and the more recent by Petrikovits, *Römische Rheinland*, p. 119f. On Sucidava: D. Tudor, "Sucidava III," *Dacia*, 11-12 (1945-47), pp. 145-208 esp. p. 207f., and *idem*, *Oltenia romana* (Bucharest, 1958), pp. 169-174. L. Ruggini has promised a study on trade which seems not to have appeared at the present writing (December 1966). On cities, see in addition to the items noted in my "Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire, 330-1025," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13 (1959), pp. 89-139, the brief remarks of F. Dölger, "Die frühbyzantinische und byzantinisch beeinflusste Stadt," in *Centro italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo: Atti del 3º Congresso internazionale di studi sull' alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1959), pp. 65-100 and the special study: *Germania Romana I. Römerstädte in Deutschland* (Heidelberg, 1960) (= *Gymnasium*: Beihefte, Heft 1).

¹⁴ Roman Britain: A. L. F. Rivet, *Town and Country in Roman Britain* (London, 1958), p. 90ff., esp. 96f. Compare E. Will, "Recherches sur le développement urbain sous l'empire romain dans le nord de la France," *Gallia*, 20 (1962), pp. 79-101.

¹⁵ Ruggini, *Italia annonaria*, p. 79ff., noting Genoa, Milan, Aquileia, and Arles. See also the presentation by (and discussion of) J. Hubert, "Évolution de la topographie et de l'aspect des villes de Gaule," in *Centro italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo: Settimane, VI: La città nell' alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1959), pp. 529-558 and 591-602.

¹⁶ H. Thompson, "Athenian Twilight," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 49 (1959), pp. 61-72, and also E. Condurachi, "Histria à l'époque du Bas-Empire," *Dacia*, N. S., 1 (1957), pp. 245-265, on the growth and significance of the southwest quarter.

¹⁷ E. B. Thomas, *Römische Villen in Pannonien* (Budapest, 1964), p. 389. Excellent recent analysis

added to the gallery if the collection is to represent late Roman society in all its complexity. The *possessor* of northern Italy lived in a city, drawing profits from trade and vile usury as well as the exploitation of land. Clients attended him, and his wife purchased luxury items on the urban market.¹⁸ The large estates of Byzantine Egypt were so unlike the *latifundia* of Gaul that the loose term "barony" is better reserved for the latter if it must be used at all.¹⁹ Independent villages flourished in Egypt even in the worst of days. Three gentlemen from the Fayum whom we shall meet again—Aurelius Isidorus, Sakaon, and Atisios—profited from the cultivation of arable land, the tenure of leaseholds, and the management of flocks or herds, while Constantine and Licinius struggled for empire.²⁰

For this was by no means a society wherein the rich had only the poor to confront. Cultivators of modest holdings yet adequate means dotted the Syrian *massif* north of Antioch as well as Byzacena around Hadrumetum. A Mediterranean trade in olive oil, stimulated probably by demand centered at Constantinople, had made the fortune of the Syrians. The North Africans, in contrast, prospered within an economy deprived of its outlets.²¹

None of the traditional generalizations comprehends all this diversity. The later Roman Empire had clearly not fallen into uniform decline, nor was it making a hesitant step toward progress by exchanging the fetters of a slave economy for the somewhat lighter burdens of "feudalism."²² Neither scheme explains the manifest prosperity of Britain or of *Italia annonaria* at various

of the North African mosaics in G.-C. Picard, *Nordafrika und die Römer* (Stuttgart, 1962) (= German translation with additional bibliography of *La civilisation de l'Afrique romaine*. References throughout to German edition), p. 55ff.; Th. Prêcheur-Canonge, *La vie rurale en Afrique romaine d'après les mosaïques* (Paris, s.d. [1962?]); P. Romanelli, "Riflessi di vita locale nei mosaici africani," in *La mosaïque gréco-romaine*, Colloque international organisé à Paris par G. Picard et H. Stern (Paris, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1965), pp. 275–284. Picard's analysis shows, however, that the proximity of the urban market plays a large part in determining what the villa should produce. This is not autarky.

¹⁸ Ruggini, *Italia annonaria*, p. 85ff., who also notes (p. 23ff.) that concentration of land ownership in northern Italy comes only late in the century, with the stabilization of the court at Milan, and then in the Po Valley alone.

¹⁹ According to A. C. Johnson and L. C. West, *Byzantine Egypt: Economic Studies* (Princeton, 1949), pp. 39–65, private ownership was on the increase during the fourth century at least at Hermopolis (p. 41) as crown land disappeared as a separate category (p. 19ff.) and the tenant of crown, hieratic, and usiac land became a *possessor* by 332 (p. 48). Private estates continued to grow through the process of patronage (p. 44ff.) which imperial legislation was able to check (p. 47f.) so that the western "baronies" never appeared (p. 65). See the review of E. R. Hardy in *American Journal of Philology*, 71 (1950), pp. 202–204, for a different point of view. A study of land registers in Lesbos, Tralles, Chios, and Magnesia also suggested to A. H. M. Jones that the average agricultural unit in those areas was small and the farms scattered: "Census Records of the Later Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 43 (1953), pp. 49–64. These conclusions have been adopted for the East by P. Lemerle, "Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance," *Revue historique*, 219 (1958), pp. 40–49.

²⁰ See *infra*, p. 34ff.

²¹ On northern Syria, see G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord. Le massif du Belus à l'époque romaine*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1953–58), esp. vol. I, pp. 394ff., 408ff., and also the commentary on this work by M. Rodinson, "De l'archéologie à la sociologie historique: notes méthodologiques . . .," *Syria*, 38 (1961), pp. 170–200. On Hadrumetum: L. Faucher, *Hadrumetum* (Paris, 1964), esp. p. 323ff. According to one commentator, the same phenomena are found in Nessana in Palestine III: Rémondon, *Crise*, p. 304.

²² See the report by N. Pigulevskaia *et al.*, "Gorod i derevnia v Vizantii v. IV–VI vv," and the critiques by P. Lemerle and P. Charanis in *Actes du XII^e Congrès international d'études byzantines*, 1 (Belgrade, 1963), esp. pp. 1–8, 275ff.

points in the fourth century. Neither accounts for the phenomena found in North Syria, Byzacena, and possibly Palestine: namely, the levelling-out of fortunes, increasing division of property holdings, and the probable growth of population.²³ Was not the later Roman Empire a society in spotty or uneven development? Only this conclusion can comprehend or explain the contradictions noted above.

If it is correct, then it adds a new dimension to the questions posed at the beginning of this study. Decisions made by Constantine or his advisors may have contributed to a process of uneven development already under way before their time. Supposedly "reckless fiscality" may have led to results probably quite far from Constantine's mind when he levied new taxes and lavished great gifts on his friends. To judge of these matters, it will be necessary to undertake the delicate task of distinguishing the condition of the provinces at the end of the third century from their situation about two or three generations later. Since much of the evidence necessarily has come at second hand, it will be wise to return to specifics in conclusion. Three documents sometimes used to prove declining population, crushing fiscality, or economic stagnation take on a different character when read without the assumptions conducive to pessimism in mind.

Uneven development is precisely what we might expect to find if we remember the remote and recent past rather than the future of decline and fall. Roman rule could hardly have created social and economic uniformities throughout the Empire even had this been its object. The crisis of the third century only helped to push each region further along a path of particular development. Athens in Greece, Antioch in Syria, the cities of the Pannonician *limes*, Augusta Raurica, Aventicum, and Aquae Helveticae in Roman Switzerland, or Tarragona in Spain: to a greater or lesser degree the mention of each lends substance to the familiar image of invasion, destruction, blight, or disrepair evoked by any mention of the third-century crisis.²⁴ It is easy to forget that warfare and even brigandage were limited in their effects. The human species, then as now, proved to be extraordinarily tenacious. The inhabitants of Roman Switzerland fortified some of their settlements or fled to caves in the Jura whence they returned.²⁵ The southern and western portions of Gaul could hardly have suffered extensively from invasion, and even brigandage seems not to have diminished their population.²⁶ Along the *limes* of the Rhine,

²³ Tchalenko, *Villages antiques*, 1, esp. p. 399ff. It might be useful to compare these late Roman instances with post-Carolingian Europe: see D. Herlihy, "The Agrarian Revolution in Southern France and Italy, 801–1150," *Speculum*, 33 (1958), pp. 23–42.

²⁴ Athens and Greece: E. Kirsten and W. Kraiker, *Griechenlandkunde*, 4th ed. (Heidelberg, 1962); Antioch: G. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, 1961); Pannonia: see *supra*, notes 13 and 17, and, in addition, A. Mócsy, "Pannonia," in *PWRE*, Suppl. 9 (1962), col. 697f., and L. Barkóczi, "Die Grundzüge der Geschichte von Intercisa," in *Intercisa*, 2 (= *Archaeologia Hungarica*, N.S., 26 [1957]), pp. 497–544. A recent survey of Roman Switzerland in R. Fellmann, "Neue Forschungen zur Schweiz in spätromische Zeit," *Historia*, 4 (1955), pp. 209–219; on Spain, in addition to the material cited *supra* in note 9, see Julio Caro Baroja, *España primitiva y romana* (Barcelona, 1957), esp. p. 104.

²⁵ Fellmann, "Neue Forschungen zur Schweiz," p. 210ff.

²⁶ F. Lot, *La Gaule* (Paris, 1947), p. 394f., but contrast J. J. Hatt, *Histoire de la Gaule romaine* (Paris, 1959), p. 228ff.

cities including Cologne, Colonia Ulpia Traiana, and Novaesium (Neuss) survived the Franks and the Alamanni.²⁷ Farther to the east, invasion failed to end urban life at Bononia and Sexaginta Prista or in the several cities of the Dobrudja.²⁸ Peasants clung to their villages in northern Italy or northern Dalmatia, while in Numidia men even increased the land under cultivation to the south and west of Tebessa.²⁹

Thus, Diocletian and his colleagues inherited an empire sadly in need of repair yet tough and resilient and, thanks to the differing effects of the invasions, probably more fluid and mobile than it had ever been.³⁰ Their own policies of reconstruction and resettlement furthered the process in that they could not dispense favors in equal measure to every subject. Some cities and some provinces—Salona and Nicomedia, North Africa and Britain among them—flourished under the stimulation of imperial favor while others languished without it.³¹ Among the examples cited, Britain may have gained the greatest benefit from imperial intervention in the local economy. Signs of prosperity appear early in the fourth century, and the date is worth noting. With its wealth based on farming, mining, and cloth production, Britain was at Constantine's disposal from the earliest years of his rule. The resources it offered may have helped to provide the extra margin of strength that led to victory on battlefields from the Milvian Bridge to the east.^{31a}

²⁷ In addition to Petrikovits, *Römische Rheinland*, p. 100ff., see the same author's "Das römische Neuss," in Römisch-Germanisch Kommission d. Deutschen Archäologische Instituts, *Neue Ausgrabungen in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 286–303.

²⁸ V. Beševliev and J. Irmscher, eds., *Antike und Mittelalter in Bulgarien* (Berlin, 1960), pp. 191ff. and 203ff. on Bononia and Sexaginta Prista. See also V. Velkov, "Der römische *limes* in Bulgarien während der Spätantike," *Studii clasice*, 3 (1961), pp. 241–249, and E. Condurachi, "Vingt années de recherches archéologiques en Roumanie," *Dacia*, N.S., 8 (1964), p. 24ff.

²⁹ Ruggini, *Italia annonaria*, pp. 31f., 527ff. On Dalmatia: B. Saria, "Dalmatia" in *PWRE*, Suppl. 8 (1956), col. 26, citing D. Sergejevskij, "Arheoloski nalazi in Sarajevu i okolici," *Glasnik zemeljskog muzeja u Sarajevu*, 2 (1947), p. 49f. Numidia: L. Leschi, "Recherches épigraphiques dans le pays de Nemenchia," in *Études d'épigraphie, d'archéologie et d'histoire africaines* (Paris, 1957), p. 295, who suggests that expansion resulted from increased cultivation of the olive.

³⁰ Displacement rather than diminution was noted by A. Bon, *Le Péloponnèse byzantin* (Paris, 1951), p. 12, for that province through the Roman period and into the third century. Social mobility has been demonstrated in an excellent study by R. MacMullen, "Social Mobility and the Theodosian Code," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 54 (1964), pp. 49–53, and used as a factor explaining the growth of Christianity by A. H. M. Jones, "The Social Background of the Struggle between Paganism and Christianity," in A. Momigliano ed., *Paganism and Christianity* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 17–38.

³¹ The study of the graves at Intercisa provides an excellent example of the ebb and flow of different occupying groups: Barkóczsi, *Intercisa*, 2, p. 538ff. On Salona, see E. Dyggve, *History of Salonian Christianity* (Oslo, 1951). Diocletian's building at Nicomedia in Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, chap. 7, §§ 8–10: "...Nicomediā studens urbi Romae coaequare" (ed. J. Moreau, *De la mort des persécuteurs*, 2 vols. [Paris, 1954], 1, pp. 85f.). Antioch: Downey, *History of Antioch*, pp. 317–327. North Africa: P. Romanelli, *Storia delle province romane dell'Africa* (Rome, 1959), pp. 506–526, and B. H. Warmington, *The North African Provinces from Diocletian to the Vandal Conquest* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 30ff.

^{31a} British prosperity in the third and, above all, the early fourth century may now be taken as proven against the older view in the standard work of Collingwood and Myres. In addition to the discussions of Rivet and Richmond (cited *supra*, notes 8 and 14), see D. J. Smith, "Three Fourth-Century Schools of Mosaic in Roman Britain," *La mosaïque gréco-romaine*, p. 95ff., who notes that Romano-British mosaics are almost entirely to be dated from 300 to 370 and that they are without parallel in Gaul or Germany save at Cologne or Trier. Britain may provide further evidence of the shifts and changes in this period. Farmsteads around Salisbury plain were abandoned in the late third century and it may be they were located on an imperial domain which was converted into a sheep run, possibly with wealthy tenants holding leases. The dispossessed peasants may have been used in

Corresponding to the fluid nature of the society over which the tetrarchs ruled, the reforms they initiated were tentative and experimental, sometimes sporadic and often in reversal of lines of development manifest before and after them. The army was essentially a frontier force and, in that respect, deviates from the policies initiated by Gallienus to which Constantine later returned.³² The tetrarchy itself was by no means the fulfillment of a master plan; it grew to meet certain specific needs including the rebellion of Carausius in Britain.³³ Diocletian's fiscal reforms, designed to render the collection of taxes for the *annona* less arbitrary and the returns more substantial, took shape in gradual stages beginning in 287 and continuing even after his abdication. The very nature of the tax may have changed during this period and the basis for its calculation varied from diocese to diocese according to local circumstance and tradition.³⁴

Diocletian's currency became a "system" only with the last reform: the introduction, in 294, of the 10 gm. silver-washed *follis* and its subsidiaries. Earlier stages had been highly experimental, most particularly in finding the proper weight for the gold *aureus*. Initially the mints struck them at the rate of seventy to the pound before settling, in 286, upon the definitive sixty to the pound. With this stable currency the Emperor doubtless hoped to restore confidence and end the inflationary spiral of the third century. Results ran contrary to his expectations. The reform of the copper currency, in particular the devaluation of the Aurelian XX. I radiate, contributed to an increase in prices which the Edict of 301 had failed to arrest even before the agents of the fisc ceased to enforce it.³⁵ Like the attitude of many of the tetrarchs towards Christianity, Diocletian's financial policies were seldom marked by any consistency of approach.

Thus, Constantine inherited a society unevenly shaped by predecessors who had perforce favored some provinces and neglected others, by rulers who had

ditching and cultivating the newly recovered Fenlands. C. F. C. Hawkes, "Britons, Romans, and Saxons round Salisbury and in Cranbourne Chase," *Archaeological Journal*, 104 (1947), pp. 27-81, and Rivet, *Town and Country*, p. 118.

³² An excellent survey of the Diocletianic army in Jones, *LRES*, 1, pp. 52-60. The controversy between Seston and van Berchem has become, I believe, largely verbal, with the greater weight of the evidence in van Berchem's favor. The question is: what weight to assign to the *comites* found in P. Oxy. 43, *CIL*, XI, 6168, and *CIL*, III, 5565. Are they only sporadic afforcements of the old *sacer comitatus* and thus indicative merely of the existence of a "troupe d'escort à l'empereur" before Constantine (van B.)? Or are they permanent detachments constituting "une garde impériale élargie" (Seston)? Even Seston admits that full development of the "double army" was achieved only under Constantine with the emergence of separate hierarchies of command. See references *supra*, note 2.

³³ W. Seston, *Dioclétien et la tétrarchie*, 1 (Paris, 1946), pt. 1, *passim*, esp. pp. 184-189.

³⁴ Excellent summary of earlier theories and *mise au point* in Rémondon, *Crise*, pp. 287-292.

³⁵ C. H. V. Sutherland has studied the coinage of Diocletian in a number of essays of which the most important for the present purposes are: "Flexibility in the 'Reformed' Coinage of Diocletian," in *Essays in Roman Coinage presented to Harold Mattingly* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 174-189, esp. 174ff., "Diocletian's Reform of the Coinage," *JRS*, 45 (1955), p. 116ff., and "Denarius and Sestertius...," *JRS*, 51 (1961), p. 96ff. The inflationary pressures of the reform can be seen in a papyrus studied by H. Mattingly and C. Roberts, "Italikon nomisma," *Transactions of the International Numismatic Congress of 1936* (London, 1938), pp. 246-251, and the problem of the price edict in Lactantius, *De mort. persec.*, chap. 7, §§ 6f. (ed. Moreau, 1, p. 85). On the edict in general too little attention has been given to W. L. Westermann, "Price Controls and Wages," in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *The Age of Diocletian, A Symposium* (New York, 1953).

not hesitated to abandon a policy when it ceased to serve them well. His own policies in the early years of his reign bear something of the same pragmatic stamp, although in later years signs of rigidity and system-building become more abundant. For that reason, it is necessary, using the Theodosian Code as a central point of reference, to distinguish phases in his career. Between 312 and 319 or 320 there is a certain consistency and unity in the problems the Emperor faced and in the ways he solved them. Between 320 and 324 the issues change, while the years after 324 have their own distinctive character.³⁶

In his first years Constantine was something of an innovator. To campaign in Italy he had to divide his army, leaving a force in Gaul to protect the frontier against barbarians. In so doing he had taken a decisive step toward further institutionalization of the *comitatenses*.³⁷ These and other measures would eventually strip the praetorian prefect of his military powers and confine him to civil administration. While there are indications that the official in question began to lose his military attributes shortly after the winning of Rome, we can be certain only that the praetorian guard was abolished early in the period under discussion.³⁸

Other innovations included extensive transfers of land as Constantine seized the possessions of his enemies and distributed them to favored individuals "on account of merit and service." So reads a constitution of 315, and the property turnover of that and earlier years must have been extensive.³⁹ In 316, Constantine found it necessary to secure the tenure of lands held continuously over the preceding ten years.⁴⁰ Such gifts doubtless assured the loyalty of "new men" including Flavius Ablavius, born of humble parents in Crete, subsequently active in trade, and (315) appointed vicar of Italy. Eventually he would rise to the praetorian prefecture of the East.⁴¹

Yet circumstances hardly permitted Constantine to become a thoroughgoing revolutionary even had he so wished. Relations with Licinius in the East remained delicate, issuing in open civil war. External pressures on the frontier rarely abated. The Emperor had to secure the loyalties of groups beyond those that included the "new men." Thus, the churches in Africa won back their properties, and members of the senatorial aristocracy found their way into his service. Quintus Aradius Rufinus, for example, had been city prefect

³⁶ Helpful chronological summaries abound: aside from O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste* (Stuttgart, 1919), see J. Maurice, *Numismatique constantinienne*, I (Paris, 1908), p. xlviif., and more recently L. Voelkl, *Der Kaiser Konstantin: Annalen einer Zeitwende* (Munich, 1957). Difficulties abound in the use of the Theodosian Code, however. On some of them, see Ph. Grierson, "The Roman Law of Counterfeiting," in *Essays in Roman Coinage*, pp. 240–261.

³⁷ *Panegyr. Lat.* 9, chap. 3, 2–3 (ed. E. Galletier, *Panégyriques latins*, 2 [Paris, 1952], p. 125). Subject to the reserves indicated *supra*, note 32, see, on the growth of the *comitatenses* in Constantine's early years, J. Moreau, "Zur spätrömischen Heeresreform," *Scripta minora* (Heidelberg, 1964), pp. 42–49.

³⁸ Zosimus, 2, chap. 17 (Bonn ed., p. 81); Aurelius Victor, *De caesaribus*, chap. 40, *in fine*; Maurice, *Numismatique constantinienne*, I, p. lxxxvii.

³⁹ *CTh.*, X, I, I (315).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, II, I (316).

⁴¹ O. Seeck, "Ablavius," in *PWRE*, I (1894), col. 103.

under Maxentius. He was restored to that office by Constantine and advanced to the consulate in 316.⁴²

Above all, the new master of Italy had to restore relations with Africa and protect the resources of that province, critical as they were to the support of the Roman *annona*. The shipmasters of Africa were bound to the guild of their fathers and forbidden to take up the easier service of the "lighters," the small ships that transferred cargo at the ports.⁴³ Shipmasters could not enter other guilds, including that of the breadmakers, unless they concurrently assumed both obligations, nor could they obtain any general exemption from their burdens.⁴⁴ The principle of inherited obligation was applied to yet another link in the fiscal chain of command at the very end of the period. According to a law of 320, the sons of decurions in Carthage were bound specifically to assume the burdens borne by their fathers.⁴⁵

Circumstances necessitated further application of the heredity principle throughout Constantine's portion of the Empire. During the campaign of 313 along the Rhine, the Emperor decreed that the sons of veterans must fight, or—should they mutilate themselves—they must serve in the municipal council. Continuing pressures within and beyond the frontier led to a reaffirmation of the principle, probably in the year 318. Only if an individual served in another organized group could he win exemptions, as did the employees of the bureaus of memorials and petitions, together with their heirs.⁴⁶

To summarize: the social legislation of this early period is immensely practical, designed as it is to reconcile and reconstruct. Underlying all the laws is that sense of hierarchy and order which has lately been identified with the military mind, but may as well express the attitude of the bureaucrat. Promotion must come, announced the Emperor in 315, by order of seniority.⁴⁷ Constantine created no new groups although he advanced beyond his predecessors in demanding that the members thereof look upon their offices and their obligations as a matter of inheritance. Given the constant dangers that he faced, it is not surprising that two new taxes were instituted during this period: the *collatio glebalis* and the *auri lustralis collatio*.⁴⁸

An almost unbroken series of wars marked the years between 319 and 324. Campaigns were mounted against the Alamanni, the Franks, the Sarmatians, and—finally—against Licinius. The frontiers demanded constant attention, and Constantine issued notably stringent regulations governing leaves and absences.⁴⁹

⁴² O. Seeck, "Aradius," in *PWRE*, 2 (1896), col. 371, and, in general, A. Chastagnol, *La préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1960), p. 400ff. On the date of the civil war, see W. Seston, "Die Constantinische Frage," *Relazioni del X Congresso intern. di scienze storiche*, 2 (1955), p. 426.

⁴³ *CTh*, XIII, 5, 1 (314).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, XIII, 5, 2 and 3 (314S). "S" indicates Seeck's dating of constitutions (*supra*, note 36).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, XII, 1, 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 22, 1 (313S) and 2 (318S). Campaign: *Panegyr. Lat.* 9, chap. 21, 5 (ed. Galletier, 2, p. 140). Date: P. Bruun, *Studies in Constantinian Chronology* (New York, 1961), p. 32.

⁴⁷ *CTh*, VIII, 7, 1.

⁴⁸ On the dates, see E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, 1 (Paris-Brussels, 1959), p. 115f., and the discussion in Jones, *LRES*, 2, p. 1178.

⁴⁹ Alamanni: *CIL*, I, 346; Franks: *Panegyr. Lat.* 10, chap. 36, 3-5 (ed. Galletier, 2, p. 196);

These were years particularly marked by major administrative reorganization, the fundamental change being the emergence of regional praetorian prefects replacing the peripatetic prefect attached to the emperor's person. The first clearly identifiable regional prefect, Vettius Rufinus, was assigned to Gaul in 318 when Crispus assumed military command. When the Caesar returned to fight the Alamanni in 322, Severus, the second recorded prefect of the Gauls, accompanied him. After Crispus' death in 326 the office was held by Valerius Maximus, who retained it until 337.⁵⁰

Since the number and competence of the earliest prefects is a matter of interminable dispute, the following reconstruction of how the office developed must remain hypothetical. It seems that Constantine sought to redefine Diocletian's tetrarchy in dynastic terms by assigning major commands to his sons. The first prefects were "mentors" for the sons. With the proliferation of duties and responsibilities, the praetorian prefect, originally a peripatetic official after the older model, became a regional authority. He remained in office to assure continuity even though the sons exchanged commands and moved to different frontiers. Eventually the office lost its military functions: evidence, it is likely, as much of the growing specialization of government as of any conscious attempt to create countervailing military and civilian powers.⁵¹

Tentative as this reconstruction may be, there can be no doubt that major new offices had appeared before 324, occasioned for the most part by the need to reassign functions once performed by the praetorian prefect. There is no need to discuss here the new functionaries and the new *scholae*, the master of the offices, the quaestor of the sacred palace, the notaries, and the *agentes in rebus*.⁵²

It will be enough to note three important points about them. First, Licinius, too, had his own master of the offices and his own *schola* of the notaries. The parallels are suggestive, and others may be found in the area of ecclesiastical organization. Maximin Daza hoped to strengthen paganism in Asia Minor by giving it a structured organization resembling that of the Christian Church. On the other hand, it was the organization of the Christian Church that Licinius particularly feared within his domains, for he regarded its clergy and members as so many partisans loyal primarily to Constantine. It was the organization that he sought to destroy. The several rivals had apparently learned at least one lesson: the application of force will remain ineffective unless organization supports and reinforces it. Each tried to outstrip the other in perfecting the means to victory, whether on the battlefield or in the souls of men.⁵³

Sarmatians: Zosimus, 2, chap. 21 (Bonn ed., p. 85f.), and Optatianus Porphyrius, *Carmina*, 6, 14ff. (ed. E. Kluge, p. 7); defeat of the Goths on the Moesian frontiers: *CIL*, III, 6159. Date of the victory over Licinius: Seston, "Constantinische Frage," p. 425. Regulation of leave: *CTh*, VII, 12, 1 (323).

⁵⁰ See Ensslin's study, cited *supra*, note 2, for full references.

⁵¹ Most recently: J. R. Palanque, "Les préfets du prétoire de Constantin," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philol. et d'Hist. Orient. et Slaves*, 10 (1950) (= *Mélanges Grégoire*, 2), pp. 483-491, where the term "mentor" is used (p. 487).

⁵² Stein, *Bas-Empire*, 1, pp. 110-122.

⁵³ Licinius' administrative organization noted with references in Stein, *ibid.*, p. 469, note 73, but

This observation suggests a second point. Constantine had initiated major administrative reforms *before* 324, and they help to explain the definitive victory he won during the campaign of that year. Impressive as the tactical capacities of the Emperor and Crispus may have been, the key to their victory over Licinius was the fleet. Now fleets are not built in a day; their construction, organization, and maintenance demand an immense investment of materiel, effort, and intelligence. Apparently Constantine could mobilize without strain the resources for naval warfare and for the support of an army which (like that of Licinius) seems extraordinarily large when judged by the standards of the period. From the logistical point of view, the campaign of 324 was no mean accomplishment. It had applied the ultimate test to the massive bureaucratic and military organization developed in the preceding years.⁵⁴

Needless to say—and this is the third point—bureaucratic growth had its darker side. Throughout this period there is abundant evidence of what our generation has learned to call “Parkinson’s Law.” Bureaucracy proliferates. New functionaries appear to spy upon the existing hierarchies; yet Constantine never solved the problem of communication with his subjects.⁵⁵

The rivalry with Licinius, then, had brought into being a large, new-model army supported by a proliferating bureaucracy. Both must have been costly, and we hear of other charges bearing upon the state. Constantine enjoins governors who request money for public building to distinguish in their reports between those under construction and those already completed.⁵⁶ Materials seem to have been in short supply, for—in a rare gesture toward economic liberalism—Constantine permitted anyone to quarry marble and to sell it where he wished.⁵⁷ It is not surprising that the *follis* declined in weight or that, in 321, stringent controls were introduced to regulate farming of the customs taxes as well as the civic octroi duties, the latter having passed directly under the supervision of the imperial administration.⁵⁸

While the victory of 324 removed the menace of further civil war, defense of the frontier remained a constant problem throughout the thirteen years of

his economic policies seem somewhat different: so H. Grégoire, *Byzantium*, 13 (1938), p. 551 ff. Religious policies: Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 1, chap. 51 (ed. Heikel, 1, p. 31f.), and Stein, p. 103f. Maximin Daza: Lactantius, *De mortibus persec.*, chap. 36, 4–7 (ed. Moreau, p. 119).

⁵⁴ Sources for the campaign of 324: Zosimus, 2, chaps. 22–26 (Bonn ed., pp. 86–92); Eutropius, *Breviarium*, 10, chaps. 5, 6 (ed. Ruehl, p. 72); Aurelius Victor, *De caesar.*, chap. 41, 8–10; *idem*, *Epitome*, chap. 41, 6f.; Anonymus Valesianus, 21–29 (ed. R. Cessi, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 24, pt. 4, fasc. 1–2, p. 7f.). On the size of armies, see the data in my “Barbarians in Justinian’s Armies,” *Speculum*, 50 (1965), pp. 294–322.

⁵⁵ Note the rise of episcopal jurisdiction: *CTh*, I, 27, 1 (318S), and possibly *Const. Sirmond.*, 1 (333).

⁵⁶ *CTh*, XV, 1, 2 (321).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, X, 19, 1 (320).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 13, 2 and 3 (321). In the first months after Diocletian’s abdication, Maxentius seems to have taken the lead in reducing the *follis* to 8 or 6.5 gm., except at Carthage. After 306, he introduced the uniform 6.5. Constantine, who had started with 10 gm. at London, Trier, and Lyons, followed Maxentius in striking 8 gm. at Trier and Lyons and, after 306, 6.5 gm. In the following years he outstripped his rivals with 4.5 (early in 309), 3.5 (by 313) 3 (by 317), and, before 320, even 2.5 gm. The eastern mints maintained 10 gm. at least through the death of Severus (16 September 307). The first issues of Licinius (after 11 November 308?) begin at 6.5 gm., are reduced to 5 gm. in 312, and finally decline to the weight of the Constantinian *follis*. See J. P. C. Kent, “Bronze coinage under Constantine I,” *Numismatic Chronicle*, 6th Ser., 17 (1957), pp. 16–77.

our third and last period. The Danubian *limes* was strengthened and a bridge built across the river between Oescus and Sucidava in 328. The younger Constantine had to take arms against the Goths.⁵⁹ 332 witnessed a campaign against the Sarmatians. During the following year a reshuffling of commands transferred Constantius to the eastern frontier from Gaul while Constantine II replaced him in the latter province. In 334 there was yet another campaign against the Sarmatians while, in the last months of his life, Constantine prepared a major expedition in the east.⁶⁰ As early as 325, the double army of the later Empire had assumed its definitive form with the mobile reserve or *comitatenses* distinguished from the *ripenses*, the frontier force stationed along the Rhine and the Danube.⁶¹ During the same year, Annus Tiberianus organized in Africa the first *fundi limitotrophi*, or estates reserved to the support of the *limitanei*, the frontier guard in that province.⁶²

New burdens were added to the continuing needs of defense. Constantinople was dedicated in 330, after six years of construction, and immediately the various demands of the new city had to be satisfied. In 330, the appropriate property owners were forced to assume the burden of maintaining the city's aqueducts.⁶³ Bread distributions began in 332.⁶⁴ Shipments of grain from Alexandria became sufficiently vital to the city's existence that both a pagan sorcerer and a Christian bishop could be accused of interfering, each in his own way, with the safe arrival of supply.⁶⁵ Building in Constantinople was matched during these years by the extensive construction of churches elsewhere in the Empire.⁶⁶

The victory over Licinius must have permitted Constantine to discharge numbers of soldiers from his armies, and the numerous edicts on veterans' privileges demonstrate the importance of the matter during the years after 324.⁶⁷ Depending upon the nature and length of service, veterans and, in some instances, their wives were exempt from various amounts of the capitation tax.⁶⁸ Veterans were further exempted from *vectigalia* in 326, from forced labor and municipal services.⁶⁹ In the preceding year, they were granted 25,000 *folles*, vacant lands, and a yoke of oxen with seed corn should they undertake to till the soil.⁷⁰ If the settlements were at all successful, they

⁵⁹ Defense of the Danube: V. Velkov, "La construction en Thrace à l'époque du Bas-Empire," *Archeologia*, 10 (1958), p. 124ff., and studies cited *supra*, notes 13, 28. Campaigns against Goths and Sarmatians: Jordanes, *Getica*, chap. 21 (ed. Mommsen, Mon. Germ. Hist.: *Auctt. Antt.*, 5, pt. 1 [1882], p. 87); Anon. Vales., 31f. (ed. Cessi, p. 8). Persian expedition: Eusebius, *V. Const.*, 4, chap. 56 (ed. Heikel, p. 140f.); Aurelius Victor, *De caesari*, chap. 41.

⁶⁰ *CTh*, VII, 20, 4, and see the materials noted *supra* in notes 2, 32, 37.

⁶¹ Ch. Saumagne, "Un tarif fiscal au quatrième siècle de notre ère," *Karthago*, 1 (1950), pp. 105–220, esp. p. 152.

⁶² *CTh*, XV, 2, 1 (330).

⁶³ *Chronicon Paschale*, 1, p. 394.

⁶⁴ Eunapius, *Vitae philosophorum*, 462f. (ed. and trans. W. C. Wright, *Philostratus and Eunapius* [London, 1922], p. 382ff.); Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1, chap. 35.

⁶⁵ Eusebius, *V. Const.*, 2, chap. 46 (ed. Heikel, p. 60f.), and see material cited *supra*, note 2.

⁶⁶ *CTh*, VII, 20, 1–5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, VII, 20, 4 (325).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, VII, 20, 2 (326S).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, VII, 20, 3 (325S).

would have helped to eradicate pockets or enclaves of rural underpopulation with which the Empire seems to have been dotted. When he recruited some barbarians into the army and assigned others to the land, Constantine pursued the same objective by a different means.⁷⁰

The Emperor's treatment of his veterans is thoroughly typical of the laws dating from this last period. Constantine devoted great effort to defining status and creating links between service or obligation on the one hand and privilege or exemption on the other. In no way a new policy, it was nonetheless pursued now with greater consistency and rigor in time of greater calm and under the supervision of administrators who held office for a strikingly long time. A few examples will suffice. In 320, a woman cohabiting with a slave did not lose her freedom although children born of the union were considered illegitimate and possessed only Latin rights. In 331, the woman herself lost her free status.⁷¹ The civil service was distinguished from the military and awarded special privileges which might be inherited.⁷² To avoid advancement by patronage, standards of promotion were carefully defined.⁷³ Civil and military accountants, apparently notorious for their fraud and thievery, were reduced to the status of slaves so that they might be tortured into honest behavior.⁷⁴ Not long after the dedication of Constantinople, slaves were forbidden to flee, and, in 332, Constantine forbade the flight of *coloni* as well, ordering that they be returned to their place of *origo*.⁷⁵

The *navicularii* were frequently the subject of laws although now the accent lay more on privilege than upon obligation. Those who bore a fiscal cargo from Spain to Rome were exempt from extraordinary burdens.⁷⁶ The guild of the shipmasters must arrange the order of voyages undertaken by its members so that no one individual would constantly make the longer journeys.⁷⁷ In 334, the Emperor created an eastern fleet to serve Constantinople. Its members received exemptions and were paid freight charges at the rate of 4 per cent of the grain plus one solidus for each 1,000 measures. Comparisons suggest that these rates were far from generous: the shipmaster could do much better on the free market, and the figures are lower even than those established by Justinian in the sixth century.⁷⁸

The decurions, that vital link in the tax-collecting chain, received more than their share of attention in this period, as they did, indeed, throughout the century. They were held to the municipality of their birth.⁷⁹ Those who had successfully fled from the council into the civil service were permitted to escape their burdens if they had served long enough. However, according to a

⁷⁰ Eusebius, *V. Const.*, 4, chap. 6 (ed. Heikel, p. 119).

⁷¹ *CTh*, IV, 12, 3 and 4.

⁷² Separation: *CTh*, VIII, 9, 1 (335); inheritance: *ibid.*, VII, 22, 3 (331).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 1, 2 (331); X, 15, 2 (334).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII, 1, 3 and 4 (333; 334).

⁷⁵ Slaves: *CJ*, VI, 1, 6; *coloni*: *ibid.*, V, 17, 1 (332).

⁷⁶ *CTh*, XIII, 5, 4 (324).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, XIII, 5, 6 (334).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, XIII, 5, 7 (334); cf. Johnson and West, *Byzantine Egypt*, pp. 160-162.

⁷⁹ *CTh*, XII, 1, 12 (325).

law of 326,⁸⁰ inheritance would call back their sons. In 329, Constantine cautioned that the clergy must not grow in numbers too quickly. If wealth and lineage demanded, then service in the municipal council should prevail. "For the wealthy must assume secular obligations, and the poor must be supported by the wealth of the churches."⁸¹ To each order its task in the articulated society.

An articulated society is no easy burden to support. It presented problems that evoked further intervention on the part of the state, still more paper work, and still more secretaries to undertake the paper work. One example will demonstrate the point. In 324, the *decemprimi* were ordered to calculate the tax assessment of the municipality in accord with regulations published by the government: this to protect the humble folk. In 328, the *distributio* of the extraordinary burdens was taken out of the hands of the chief decurions and entrusted to the governor himself.⁸² Thus, "Parkinson's Law" continued to operate, and it would seem that the economic structure of the Empire could hardly have supported so vast a machine after the troubles of the third century.

Yet, we have seen that there were reasons why it might. Despite a generation of conflict among Diocletian's successors, a number of provinces enjoyed a "Constantinian renaissance," if in very different ways. A wealthy local aristocracy beautified its villas and reconstructed its towns in Britain.⁸³ Around Cologne and in Thrace, urban and rural areas alike entered upon a marked period of prosperity.⁸⁴ Recovery in Pannonia was confined to the rural area as Aquincum, Brigetio, and Carnuntum could do little more than survive in straitened circumstances.⁸⁵ In this respect, the Pannonian cities were by no means alone. Carthage, Sucidava, Augusta Raurica, and many of the cities of Gaul—Trier excepted—lacked their old glitter and have been described as "squalid."⁸⁶ Squalor does not mean, of course, that economic activity declined precipitously or ceased in a marked degree. At Histria, for example, the Constantinian walls embraced only a third of the area of the Hellenistic city. Housing was necessarily modest despite economic circumstances markedly better than those the third century had known.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, XII, 1, 14.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, XVI, 2, 6.

⁸² *Ibid.*, XI, 16, 3 and 4.

⁸³ In addition to the materials cited in note 31^a, *supra*, see S. S. Frere, "Verulamium, Three Roman Cities," *Antiquity*, 38 (1964), pp. 103–112. Villas are discussed with references by P. H. Blair, *Roman Britain and Early England* (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 126ff., and by Rivet, *Town and Country*, p. 105ff.

⁸⁴ On Thrace, in addition to the references in note 28, *supra*, see V. Velkov, "Les campagnes et la population rurale en Thrace au IV^e–VI^e siècles," *Byzantinobulgarica*, 1 (1962), pp. 31–66, esp. p. 35ff., and *idem*, *Gradut v Trakija i Dakija prez kusnata anticnost* (Sofia, 1959), with German summary. Cologne: in addition to materials in note 13, *supra*, H. Schmitz, *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium* (Cologne, 1956), p. 235ff., and *idem*, "Zur wirtschaftlichen Bedeutung d. römischen Gutshofen in Köln-Mündersdorf," *Bonner Jahrbücher*, 139 (1934), pp. 80–94.

⁸⁵ Thomas, *Römische Villen in Pannonien*, p. 400; Mócsy, "Pannonia," col. 697f.

⁸⁶ Picard, *Nordafrika*, p. 131f.; H. J. Diesner, *Der Untergang d. römischen Herrschaft in Nordafrika* (Weimar, 1964), p. 110ff.; K. M. Matthews, *Cities in the Sand: Leptis Magna and Sabratha* (Philadelphia, 1957). Sucidava: see note 13, *supra*. Augusta Raurica: F. Stähelin, *Die Schweiz in römischer Zeit*, 3rd ed. (Basel, 1948), p. 289ff. Gaul: Hatt, *Gaule romaine*, p. 251ff. Nicopolis ad Istrum: T. Ivanov, in Beševliev and Irmscher, eds., *Antike und Mittelalter* (*supra*, note 28), p. 281ff.

⁸⁷ E. Condurachi, "Histria à l'époque du Bas-Empire," *Dacia*, N.S., 1 (1957), pp. 245–265.

The recovery of Histria is significant in yet another respect. Like other centers along the lower Danube *limes*, it prospered thanks to the interest the Emperor had taken in the frontier and in the lands beyond it. Numismatic evidence points to a marked revival of exchanges in a region where Constantine, continuing and extending the work of Diocletian, had fortified cities, built bridges, and improved the roads.⁸⁸ An abundance of Christian monuments distinguished Trier, the imperial residence, making it a center of influence in the transmission of artistic styles.⁸⁹ Thrace prospered with the foundation of Constantinople, and the new city's influence was felt at even greater distances. Along the great diagonal route from Poetovio in the west to the capital, the administrative centers of Serdica and Sirmium flourished as did Naissus, a special recipient of favor as the Emperor's birthplace. In contrast, the cities along the *Via Egnatia*—of diminished importance after the foundation of Constantinople—were in some instances in marked decline before the end of the fourth century.⁹⁰

Imperial interest was paramount, and (Britain always excepted) the emperor enjoyed almost a monopoly in the traditional work of adorning and rebuilding the city. Throughout Thrace, initiative had already passed into his hands by Diocletian's time, and inscriptions thenceforth bore the name of the chief of administration or the army.⁹¹ Developments in North Africa were curiously different. After Maximian and Diocletian had restored order, citizens contributed to the repair of theaters and the reconstruction of arches and temples. Following upon the tyranny of Maxentius and the usurpation of Domitius Alexander, they ceased to do so in Byzacena and Proconsularis. Constantine's own building program in the North African dioceses apparently evoked little response among the curiales and municipal aristocracy.⁹²

There are doubtless many explanations for the growth of an imperial building monopoly in many of the cities. It may be that some men of wealth had suffered losses beyond recovery during the third-century inflation. Deprived of their revenues in land and taxes, the cities could probably no longer meet their traditional obligations. And there is reason to believe that such undertakings must have been extraordinarily costly in the early fourth century. It was a period of building activity so intense that skilled craftsmen could not be found in sufficient quantity. "There is need for as many architects as possible, but they do not exist," remarked Constantine as he granted the profession privileges greater than those enjoyed by the bulk of his subjects.⁹³

⁸⁸ H. Nubar, "Aspetti della circolazione monetaria di Histria nell' epoca romana," *Dacia*, N.S., 7 (1963), p. 241ff., and K. Horedt, *Contributii la istoria transilvaniei in secolele IV–XIII* (Bucharest, 1958), pp. 11–40.

⁸⁹ On Trier in general: *Mémorial d'un voyage de la Société des Antiquaires de France en Rhénanie* (Paris, 1953); and on its influence: F. Gerke, *Der Trierer Agriculus Sarkophag* (Trier, 1949), pp. 9–13.

⁹⁰ P. Lemerle, *Philippines et la Macédoine orientale à l'époque chrétienne et byzantine* (Paris, 1945), p. 70ff., and R. E. Hodinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia* (London, 1963), p. 72. On Serdica, see I. Venedikov in Beševliev and Irmscher eds., *Antike und Mittelalter*, p. 162.

⁹¹ Velkov, "Construction en Thrace" (*supra*, note 59), p. 124ff., esp. p. 125f.

⁹² Warmington, *North African Provinces*, pp. 30–40.

⁹³ *CTh*, XIII, 4, 1 (334) and 2 (337).

Craftsmen may have commanded higher wages than the municipal aristocracy chose to pay when it was a question of restoring the traditional monuments of the Greco-Roman city. Certainly, they were more than eager to follow the Emperor's example and construct parish churches, martyria, family tomb chapels, and funeral halls—in short, the building demanded by the newly recognized Christian faith.⁹⁴ Resources are never infinite; a careful survey of building in each province might demonstrate that the men of the fourth century preferred to allocate them to the new, rather than the old, purpose. In any event, decline of local participation in urban reconstruction does not indicate that men generally were impoverished. There are too many other indications to the contrary: thanks largely to imperial initiative, this was a society prospering or developing if in uneven fashion.

It is extraordinarily difficult to find a satisfactory economic explanation of how the one (imperial initiative) produced the other (uneven prosperity or development). To return to one of the questions posed earlier in this paper: how did Constantine's policies promote development, beyond the fact that he restored order and put wealth into circulation through gifts and grants? Some historians have recently suggested that the need to pay taxes in kind may have stimulated agricultural productivity and increased land values. Under certain circumstances, this may indeed have been true, but evidence to be considered at the end of the present study suggests that the tax system could not have been universally beneficial.⁹⁵

Inflation of the copper currency may have been conducive to development, although Diocletian's successors certainly had no such thought in mind as they began, shortly after the Emperor's abdication, to vie with each other in reducing the weight of the *follis*.⁹⁶ If the amount of copper in circulation did indeed increase sixfold, while the individual *follis* declined in weight but not in value, the resulting process would have been inflationary. It could have stimulated the labor market in a period when active employment was certainly easily to be found.⁹⁷ After 325, the imperial government introduced into Egypt significantly large quantities of coins from the mints at Nicomedia, Cyzicus, and Constantinople. Prices seem to have risen sharply after 325, and it is tempting to see in that inflationary spiral either the stimulation of trade with Constantinople or the results of conscious imperial policy. Coins may have been introduced into Egypt to compensate for inadequate production at the Alexandria mint with inflationary results as unwelcome as they were unexpected.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Krautheimer, *Early Christian Architecture*, pp. 17–44, esp. p. 21 ff.

⁹⁵ A "positive" view is taken by Richmond, *Roman Britain*, p. 94 f. and, with reservations, by Ruggini, *Italia annoveraria*, p. 29 f. *Contra*: E. Faure, *Etude de la capitation de Dioclétien d'après le Panégyrique VIII* (Paris, 1961) (= Inst. de Droit rom. de l'Univ. de Paris, *Varia*, IV), pp. 151–153.

⁹⁶ See *supra*, note 58.

⁹⁷ Giesecke, *Antikes Geldwesen*, p. 209. For problems encountered in analyzing this inflation—which was an inflation of the copper only and did not affect prices in gold—see L. C. West and A. C. Johnson, *Currency in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (Princeton, 1944), pp. 157–170.

⁹⁸ Hoards are studied in J. Schwartz, "La circulation monétaire dans l'Egypte du IV^e siècle," *Schweizer Münzblätter*, 9 (1959), pp. 11, 40. Prices in Johnson and West, *Byzantine Egypt*, p. 175 ff., and for an analysis thereof, see A. C. Johnson, *Egypt and the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, 1951), p. 57 ff. An interesting index to price trends generally is that of gold: see *infra*, note 99.

In their quest for gold to accumulate as state reserves, Diocletian and Constantine may have initiated practices that could eventually have stimulated development in the following manner. The government obtained gold for its *solidi* in a variety of ways: from certain taxes, thanks to windfalls, and by forced purchases made with a copper currency of decreasing weight but probably of constant nominal value.⁹⁹ The private individual, in turn, must often have used the copper to purchase the *solidi* with which he paid certain taxes.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the state laid an additional and hidden tax upon the individual whenever it purchased his gold or sold him *solidi*. In so doing, it diverted his resources from private satisfaction into "public" reserves, a procedure for which economists have found the not quite felicitous term "forced savings."¹⁰¹ Forced savings made in this fashion would have been conducive to development if the state used the gold it had accumulated so cheaply for socially useful purposes. Under Constantine, the *navicularii* received payment in *solidi*. Presumably gifts to churches and favorites, for which Constantine was famous, filtered down into the lower levels of society through building operations undertaken by bishops and men of wealth.¹⁰² State manipulation of the gold currency could have had a major effect upon the economy only at the end of the century, however, when the bureaucracy and the army made purchases rather than exacting levies in kind.¹⁰³ By that time, certainly, the amount of gold in circulation as currency had vastly increased, and this could have happened only in a society marked by increasing productivity.¹⁰⁴

In trying to explain the economics of recovery and development, we are asking questions of the sources which they are not disposed to answer; and

⁹⁹ Gold supply: J. P. C. Kent, "Gold Coinage in the Later Roman Empire," in *Essays in Roman Coinage*, pp. 190-204, and see *infra*, note 104. Gold purchases are indicated early in the fourth century in P. Oxy. 2106: "to the magistrates and senate of Oxyrhynchus...to demand 38 pounds only, from everyone according to their means.... Ten thousand myriads for each pound shall be paid to those providing it by the sacred Treasury" (editors' translation: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 17, p. 184). In A.D. 300, monthly requisitions were made at the rate of 60,000 den. to the pound: P. Beatty *Panop.* 2, 11, 215 ff., and the comments of the editor, T. C. Skeat, *Papyri from Panopolis* (Dublin, 1964), p. 174f. The inflation in the price of gold during the fourth century would have worked to bring the metal into circulation: R. Rémondon, "À propos du Papyrus d'Antinoë no. 38," *Chroniques d'Egypte*, 22 (1957), pp. 130-146.

¹⁰⁰ The mechanism is known only for the end of the fourth century and for the fifth and then for the city of Rome alone: *Nov. Val.*, 16 (445) and Symmachus, *Relatio*, 29. But there seems to have been speculation in the *solidus* as early as 317: *CTh*, IX, 22, 1. On this constitution, see Grierson, "Roman Law of Counterfeiting," p. 248.

¹⁰¹ E.g., in discussing the economic development of the Soviet Union and Brazil, states where no outside aid was available. I owe this information to Professor Virginia Galbraith of Mount Holyoke College.

¹⁰² *Navicularii*: *CTh*, XIII, 5, 7 (334). Grants to the churches: *Liber Pontificalis*, chap. 34 (ed. L. Duchesne [Paris, 1886], 1, pp. 174-187.) Prodigality, favorable and unfavorable views: Eusebius, *V. Const.*, 1, chap. 43; 3, chap. 32; 4, chaps. 1 and 4 (ed. Heikel, pp. 27f., 93, 118, 119), and Ammianus Marcellinus, 16, chap. 8, § 12 (ed. Gardthausen, p. 89).

¹⁰³ Jones, *LRES*, 1, p. 839f.; but Euseb., *V. Const.*, 3, chap. 32, indicates that the provincial officials will furnish money as well as labor and materials for church building.

¹⁰⁴ Evidence on the circulation of gold summarized by Piganiol, *Empire chrétien*, p. 294. That it was a question of money in circulation seems to me demonstrated by Constantine's reputation (*Anonymous, De rebus bellicis*, 2, chap. 1, in E. A. Thompson, *A Roman Reformer and Inventor* [Oxford, 1952], p. 94) and even more forcefully by *CTh*, IX, 21, 7 (369) and 8 (374). On the significance of the transition to a gold economy, see R. S. Lopez, *Settecento anni fa: il ritorno all'oro nell'Occidente ducentesco*, *Quaderni della Rivista storica italiana*, 4 (Naples, 1955), pp. 51-57.

any conclusions we draw are necessarily tentative and hypothetical. The other questions indicated at the beginning of this study are more readily answered from the materials at hand; thus the conclusions can be expressed with greater confidence. First of all, to call Constantine a revolutionary is to abuse the term. There were precedents for the *comitatenses* remotely in the armies of Gallienus and more recently in the sporadic and occasional afforcements of the *sacer comitatus* which the tetrarchs undertook.¹⁰⁵ Regional praetorian prefects probably first appeared as "mentors" when Constantine's sons began to share the burdens of empire. Thus the regional prefecture may have grown up in the same pragmatic and *ad hoc* fashion as the tetrarchy itself. Like the tetrarchy, it was a device for distributing the tasks of government. Unlike the tetrarchy (and herein its novelty appears), it assigned some of those tasks to a group of civilian administrators rather than entrusting ultimate authority in all matters civil and military to a college of rulers.

Similar reservations must be allowed for the "revolutionary" quality of Constantine's other decisions. Long-standing economic and military considerations pointed to the establishment of a "New Rome" somewhere in the vicinity of Constantinople. In the eyes of contemporaries, Diocletian had tried to create a rival for the Old Rome at Nicomedia.¹⁰⁶ If the introduction of a stable gold coinage be taken as the central feature of Diocletian's monetary reforms, then the introduction of the Constantinian *solidus* struck at seventy-two to the pound merely redefines the weight of the gold piece. There were for it precedents in Britain before Constantine's time.¹⁰⁷ We should remember, too, that if Constantine reduced the weight of the silver-washed 10 gm. *follis*, he did so in competition with his rivals.¹⁰⁸

It is hardly necessary to add that in the quantity rather than in the mere fact of Constantine's building lies its novelty.¹⁰⁹ When he restored the *limes* or rededicated cities, Constantine was following very old as well as very recent precedents. Nor did he break new ground when he made a religious cult the special object of his protection, however novel the Christians, specifically, may have found imperial favor.

Yet there is a distinctive quality about these decisions which prevents us from merely assimilating Constantine's work to that of his predecessors. The distinctive quality is this: they were uniformly good decisions. This does not mean, of course, that they were ethically or morally commendable. It means, rather, that they could be enforced or gave rise to policies that could be carried out. In some instances they defined what practice should be for centuries to come.

¹⁰⁵ See *supra*, notes 32, 37.

¹⁰⁶ See *supra*, note 31.

¹⁰⁷ Giesecke, *Antikes Geldwesen*, p. 197f.

¹⁰⁸ See *supra*, note 58. For a contrary view: Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali*, pp. 106–116, who concludes that Constantine was "revolutionary": "regno della moneta spicciola divisionale, dunque, il terzo secolo; regno della moneta d'oro saldamente stabilita, 'l'impero cristiano' da Costantino in poi" (p. 110). This is too dialectical: we know that the state was already making extensive gold purchases in the early fourth century (*supra*, note 99); that gold was always available in Egypt after 305 and that its use increased significantly only after the middle of the century (Johnson and West, *Byzantine Egypt*, p. 106).

¹⁰⁹ *Supra*, note 31.

Constantine avoided the failures of Diocletian while building upon his successes. He did not try to control prices. He settled upon the definitive weight for his gold coin. He found the right location for his capital city, and favored the Christian Church rather than sporadically persecuting it. He developed the tentative experiments of his predecessors into the right kind of army, and transformed the tetrarchy into the enduring federation of regional praetorian prefectures.

If we seek for explanation of this striking degree of success, we shall probably find it in bureaucratic continuity. Constantine had a talent for continuing to work even with the servants of his defeated rivals. Around him grew up a circle of men who could have known what was successful, and what unsuccessful, among the policies followed in recent years. Some of them held top office for long years under the Emperor, and not all of them were banished or killed by his sons. Under Constantine, in other words, the men at the top had enough time to plan and put their plans into effect. The lower levels of the bureaucratic machine had continued to function even in the worst years of the third century. Now, with stability at the top, continuity of policy matched continuity of implementation at the bottom.¹¹⁰

“Reckless fiscality” is no more satisfactory a judgement upon Constantine’s economic policies than was “revolutionary” a description of all of them.¹¹¹ However obscure the economics of the “Constantinian renaissance,” the condition of the Empire in the fourth century does not suggest that burdens had been recklessly thrust upon the provincials. Nor is this the quality manifest in Constantine’s decisions as they have been traced through the several phases of his reign. Circumstances between 312 and 320 called for measures of reconstruction and reconciliation. During the next four years, the potential and actual menace of war led Constantine to vie with his rival in perfecting a bureaucratic and military structure that prevailed when put to the test. After 324, he further organized the institutions that had served him so well, at the same time meeting the needs of frontier defense and of a building program almost without precedent in the Empire’s history. Better modifiers, if the substantive “fiscality” must be used, are “pragmatic” in the first two periods and “systematic” in the last.

Now “reckless fiscality,” however obscure its denotation, bears a connotation that is unmistakable. It is pejorative and evokes the image of a spendthrift emperor who devises new taxes and exacts old ones without heed for the subject’s ability to pay. “Systematic fiscality”—better, “fiscal practice”—implies a kinder view, and it will be useful to examine specific cases to determine whether the introduction of system into an unevenly developing society indeed worked to the subject’s advantage. At the same time, we shall be able to apply the microscope to an empire and its provinces hitherto viewed with a telescope, to adapt R. S. Lopez’s phrase.

¹¹⁰ See *supra*, notes 41, 42, and see also the career of Iulius Iulianus in *PWRE*, 10 (1919), col. 92f.

¹¹¹ *Supra*, note 1.

When it took its final form in 312, the system devised to assess and collect the annona was simplicity itself. Each year the praetorian prefect calculated the different amounts of commodities due from the prefecture subject to him. By Constantine's time, he could easily determine how much of the total was to be paid by each diocese within the prefecture, by each city within each diocese, and by each registered person within each city. An assessment that had been carried on throughout the Empire enabled him to do so. The census of 298 had determined the resources possessed by each taxpayer—whether in land, cattle, human beings, or all aggregated together if local practice dictated. With the completion of the census the state knew, for each individual subject to the annona, what his tax liability should be. This seems to have been expressed in ideal units or *capita*. The state could calculate what each must deliver if it divided the total amount due by the individual liability, by the total *capita*, that is, ascribed to each person entered on the register.¹¹²

Individuals and even whole cities inevitably sought exemption, reduction, or relief. In 312 an orator recounted for the Emperor Constantine the long history and recent circumstances of the city of Autun. Unlike its neighbors, Autun could not deliver its taxes. Cultivation of the land had ceased during the disasters of the third century, and the men of Autun had been unable to bring it back into full productivity. The roads were steep and the terrain difficult to traverse. New land for the extension of the vineyards could not be found, and the only solution was to apply for tax relief, for a reduction of the *capita* assessed against the city.¹¹³

Egypt provides two further examples. In 332 a certain Sakaon, in concert with two fellow δέοπτοι of Theadelphia, reported that the village was reduced to misery because it lacked adequate manpower to keep 500 *arourae* of taxable land under cultivation. They beseeched the prefect, Flavius Hyginus, to assist them in searching out members of the village who had fled into the Oxyrhynchite and the Cynopolite nomes. Sakaon and his fellows knew where the defaulters could be found, but only *force majeure* could bring them back.¹¹⁴ From two other papyri of closely contemporary date we discover the probable fundamental problem: Theadelphia's water supply had failed when villages nearer the source had cut off the channels. After at least two years of dryness, inspectors arrived to certify that the supply had indeed failed for a long time; meanwhile, Sakaon and others prayed that they be attached to more prosperous villages for assessment and collection of the annona.^{114a}

The final instance appears in an action over *longa possessio* argued in 340. Two sisters, Taesis and Herois, together with one Nilos, the latter's husband, appeared in court to contend with the villagers of Karanis. The girls had inherited property in Karanis from their father and then taken flight when they could not pay the taxes. Villagers had cultivated the land in the absence

¹¹² *Supra*, note 34; also A. H. M. Jones, "Capitatio and Iugatio," *JRS*, 47 (1957), pp. 88–94, and *LRES*, 1, p. 61f.

¹¹³ *Panegyr. lat.* 8, chaps. 5–7 (ed. Galletier, 2, pp. 93–96).

¹¹⁴ P. Jouguet, *Papyrus de Théadelphia* (Paris, 1911), no. 17.

^{114a} *Ibid.*, nos. 16, 20.

of the two girls, allegedly paid them a rent, and then tried to return the property. Apparently nobody wanted the land, burdened as it was with back taxes.¹¹⁵

Examples could be multiplied, but these three will give some idea of the problems faced by both state and taxpayer in the Age of Constantine. They prove that the Diocletianic system had its weaknesses. Its basic tax fell upon resources; not upon what men currently made of those resources. But to have assessed and collected a tax upon the exploitation of resources—upon wealth or income, as we would put it—was a task clearly beyond the administrative powers of the later Roman Empire. The census ought to have been repeated at fixed intervals, but this was not—could not be—done. The best that the individual taxpayer might hope was that the *peraequator* or the inspector of the dikes might be an intelligent and incorruptible man, when he eventually arrived.

It is essential to note what these documents do *not* prove. They do not prove that the population was declining. The orator from Autun specifically noted that his city still had all the manpower registered for it; men, unfortunately, were not working to capacity.¹¹⁶ Sakaon's fellow villagers had not perished; by his account, they had moved away. And there were villagers enough at Karanis to keep the lands of Herois and Taesis under cultivation, however grudgingly they worked.

Secondly, they do not prove that this was an impoverished society burdened by taxes which were too large in a general, absolute, or unqualified sense. Even allowing for the orator's desire to plead special circumstances, the situation of Autun seems in every way exceptional: other regions were flourishing and prosperous; Autun's roads were exceptionally bad, or possibly shifts in the trade routes had isolated the city. Its region, unlike Aquitaine, did not lend itself readily to extending cultivation of the vine. A tremendous amount or investment of labor would be needed to recondition the land, and the tax burden was just enough to render the additional effort unprofitable.¹¹⁷

Other villages provided employment for those who had left Theadelphia; Narmouthis, Hermopolis, and Theoxenis had still enough need of water to seek to deprive Theadelphia of its supply. Sakaon himself rented flocks of sheep and herds of goats for a share in the profits, an occupation that makes sense in a region on the edge of the desert where, as the other inhabitants moved away, there must have been ample space for animal husbandry.¹¹⁸ There is no reason to believe that Sakaon himself was impoverished, but obviously he could not continue to bear a tax burden calculated for very different conditions.

Most telling of all is the episode at Karanis. For forty-five years, Atisios, the father of Herois and Taesis, had paid his taxes and drawn a comfortable profit from his estates. For reasons the trial record does not explain, the

¹¹⁵ S. Riccobono *et al.*, *Fontes iuris romani anteiustiniani*, 2nd ed., 3 (Florence, 1943), pp. 318–328.

¹¹⁶ *Panegyr. lat.* 8, chap. 6, 1 (ed. Galletier, p. 94).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. 6, 2–7, 3.

¹¹⁸ Jouguet, *Papyrus de Théadelphia*, p. 30f.

daughters were unable to support the burden *within one year*.¹¹⁹ We can only guess at the reasons, but the conclusion is obvious. Changing personal circumstances, not the original amount of the tax, had created an impossible situation.

Even more, the Karanis trial illuminates much of the material already presented in that it shows how systems break down in individual instances. No amount of administrative intelligence can take into account all of the exceptions that will arise quite honestly when men are born, die, and gain or lose fortunes both modest and immense. Like all the other systems elaborated by Diocletian—and, even more, by Constantine—the fiscal system of the later Empire must have been a heavy burden in a society which, under both telescope and microscope, has shown all and more of the usual human propensity to change. Men constantly refused to do what the emperor wanted them to do. This, not Rome's economic decline in the age of Constantine, is what the Theodosian Code proves.

A conclusion will bring together some of the threads of this study. When André Piganiol first published a forceful modern presentation of an optimistic point of view in 1947, the appearance of his book constituted something of a Copernican revolution in attitudes toward the fourth century. The comparison is not idly meant, and it can prove fruitful.¹²⁰ Like the Copernican system, the optimistic interpretation was the product of changing assumptions and of recalcitrant evidence that would not fit into the old, the pessimistic, mold. Like the heliocentric universe, the optimistic interpretation on the whole better explains or comprehends the new data that have since appeared in its particular field.

Historians of the mid-twentieth century resemble astronomers of the sixteenth in that we—all of us, in some degree—fail to see the radical implications of the new viewpoint. 476 is still to some extent the center of the cosmos and we look back into the early fourth century to explain it. The population must have been declining, Constantine must have set bad standards, land must have been going out of cultivation, and so forth.

In the foregoing study I have tried to look at the later Roman Empire from the other way around, so to speak. The uneven levels of that society's development have been explained in the light of the remote Roman past, the troubles of the third century, and the experimental approach of the tetrarchs which Constantine to some extent shared during his early years.

Despite all the precedents found for his actions, precedents that make him something other than a revolutionary, the reign is nonetheless a watershed. Constantine was the author of certain "good" decisions that he could enforce

¹¹⁹ Since the father's death occurred one year prior to the hearing. For analysis of the evidence on this point, see C. J. Kraemer and N. Lewis, "A Referee's Hearing on Ownership," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 48 (1937), p. 368. Compare the career of Aurelius Isidorus who apparently gave up the direct exploitation of his own possessions and took up leaseholds yet remained prosperous: A. E. R. Boak and H. C. Youtie, *The Archive of Aurelius Isidorus* (Ann Arbor, 1960), pp. 7-10.

¹²⁰ See, for example, T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962).

or implement; these, on the whole, were decisions that promoted change in the flexible society he had inherited, although it is difficult to explain their impact in economic terms. The spread of the gold *solidus* transformed the economy; the world was never the same again after the foundation of Constantinople and the active support rendered to Christianity.

In other respects, Constantine was far less successful. During the last years of his reign, the period when order and system were most developed and widespread, he attempted to define what the task of each man should be within the cadres of an articulated society. In so doing, he worked against the process of change which his other decisions had done so much to promote. The gap widened between what actually was and what was supposed to be. The Theodosian Code is an index of how wide and how dangerous that gap became.